



Sponsored by

[Back to Story](#) - [Help](#)

US bill would fight waste, fraud in Iraq rebuilding effort



Tue Mar 20, 6:20 PM ET

Democrats in the US Congress introduced legislation Tuesday to fight corruption in the US reconstruction effort in Iraq, which has been riddled with fraud and waste.

They said their "Iraq Reconstruction Improvement Act" would increase accountability and oversight of American reconstruction projects in Iraq.

"Reconstruction has been beset by gross corruption and massive American and Iraqi bureaucratic confusion," said Democratic Representative Tom Lantos (news, bio, voting record), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the bill's main author.

"The Iraqi people, hoping that the fall of Saddam would bring peace and prosperity to their country, have instead been handed half-built hospitals, failed water projects, and a power grid that is more off than on," he said.

"It is unacceptable that we have failed to deliver the basic services that would allow Iraqis to live dignified, peaceful lives."

His bill would increase monitoring of reconstruction efforts in Iraq and would expand the powers of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, among other enhanced oversight measures.

"Conscience demands that we consider not only how our country conducts itself in Iraq and how and when our troops will come home, but also what we leave behind," said Lantos.

"This legislation creates accountability for our efforts to set Iraq back on its feet," he said.

As the House legislation was announced Tuesday, the Senate held hearings on ways to tighten controls on contractors in Iraq, which Democrats alleged has greatly hiked the cost of the four-year-old war.

"Our nation has sent nearly a half a trillion dollars to Iraq, and we're on track to send one trillion dollars with few or no controls over how that money has been spent," said Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Patrick Leahy (news, bio, voting record).

"The Bush administration has chosen to use private contractors in this war to a greater extent than any time in our history. And the trend has raised the cost of this military action by untold billion," said Leahy.

The Democratic senator earlier this year introduced a bill, the "War-Profitteering Prevention Act," which would make acts of war-profitteering a crime.

"Billions of dollars spent in Iraq unaccounted for ... may have been lost to fraud or other misconduct," Leahy said, adding that the extent of "fraud, waste and abuse in Iraq ... may be unprecedented in our history."

Stuart Bowen, special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, who testified at the Senate hearing, said corruption within the Iraqi government is also "a serious problem inhibiting all progress in Iraq."

"We have called it the second insurgency in our reports," said Bowen, who testified that coalition investigators had uncovered some 2,000 fraud cases within the Iraqi government, totaling some eight billion dollars.

Copyright © 2007 [Agence France Presse](#). All rights reserved. The information contained in the AFP News report may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without the prior written authority of Agence France Presse.